

## A Cinnamon Teal x Northern Shoveler hybrid

by JAMES M. HARRISON AND JEFFERY G. HARRISON

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The subject of this communication is a bird of the year, having been bred in captivity by Mr. John Hall of Ixworth Game Farm, Suffolk, in the spring of 1963. It is a male and is now preserved in our collection.

The male parent was the Cinnamon Teal, *Anas cyanoptera* Vieillot, the duck a Northern Shoveler, *A. clypeata* Linnaeus.

In appearance this bird is a typical Shoveler species, and as a drake it evinces little sexual dimorphism, in this respect of course conforming to the southern group of Shovelers, particularly the Australian Shoveler, *A. rhynchos rhynchos* Phillips.

Although this bird died in July, it should be noted that when it was prepared, its moult was to all intents and purposes complete, and that therefore its characters were fully developed and no further significant alteration would have occurred. There was no sign of any eclipse plumage developing, but this was probably due to ill-health.

The following are the plumage details:—



Photo: Pamela Harrison

Hybrid Cinnamon Teal x Northern Shoveler.

### UPPER PARTS:

*Back adjacent to neck:* this area is a mixture of dark sepia, the feathers edged narrowly with pale Tawny Ochraceous (Ridgway, Pl. V.4), the dark sepia tending to form an irregular triangular area with its apex directed caudalwards.

*Mantle:* this is very similar: on either side the short scapulars are conspicuously barred blackish-sepia and broad Orange-Ochraceous (*l. c.* Pl. V.3). The median scapulars are sepia, edged Tawny Ochraceous and with pale shaft streaks of same colour, while the longer of the series are Pale Blue (*l. c.* Pl. IX.16). The longest scapulars are rich sepia, some having a pale, near white, shaft streak.

*Lower back and rump:* pale sepia, the feathers edged narrowly with Drab (*l. c.* Pl. III.18).

*Upper tail-coverts:* similar to lower back and rump.

*Rectrices:* central pair rich sepia, very narrowly edged pale drab. Rest pale sepia obliquely patterned on outer vanes with brownish-sepia and edged fairly broadly with pale drab.

#### UNDER PARTS:

Whole of breast and belly as far as vent, pale drab with a large admixture of Liver Brown (*l. c.* Pl. IX.4), the whole area being fully marked with dusky sepia crescentic barring; the areas of maximal suffusion of liver brown and crescents being over the breast and at the vent, though in this latter situation the spots and sepia markings are much smaller.

*Under tail-coverts:* pale drab with dusky sepia markings; a few feathers are mainly sepia, but with the basal half to two-thirds drab, finely vermiculated sepia.

*Rectrices:* pale greyish-sepia.

*Flanks:* Wood Brown (*l. c.* Pl. III.9), broadly marked with dusky sepia V- and U-shaped markings, posteriorly Chestnut (*l. c.* Pl. IV.9).

*Wing:* (upper surfaces).

*Coverts:* Glaucous-Blue (*l. c.* Pl. IX.19).

*Speculum:* dull bronze-green, broadly edged above by whitish; below very narrowly whitish.

*Primaries:* sepia.

*Secondaries:* sepia.

#### HEAD AND NECK:

*Crown:* dark sepia.

*Nape and back of neck:* uniform sepia, less dark than crown.

*Lores:* anteriorly dark sepia extending upwards on to crown. A dull pale crescent runs from the dusky chin in front of the eye and upwards slightly above it. This marking is freely and finely spotted with sepia.

*Cheeks:* Isabella Color (*l. c.* Pl. III.23) freely and finely spotted with sepia. Over ear-coverts and on sides of neck dull greenish-blue striations. Lower neck above and below, Liver Brown closely patterned with bars, spots and U-shaped markings. Anteriorly the neck is Fawn Color (*l. c.* Pl. III.22) striated with small dusky sepia spots. There is a strong sepia chin patch.

*Wing:* (under-surface)

*Under wing-coverts:* white.

*Axillaries:* white.

*Fore edge of wing:* pale drab somewhat mottled.

*Under tail-coverts:* Isabella Color with heavy sepia markings of blackish-sepia.

*Rectrices:* greyish-sepia.

## SOFT PARTS:

*Iris*: amber.

*Bill*: L.M. dull greyish-green, dusky at tip.

U.M. wax yellow, tip dusky.

*Tarsi and toes*: wax yellow, webs and nails dusky.

*Measurements in mm.*

Wing:	= 212
Bill:	
Length from feather margin	= 56.5
Width at nostrils	= 15
Width at widest point	= 21.5
Tarsus:	= 37
Middle toe without claw	= 43
Tail	= 70
<i>Pectoral girdle</i> (articulated)	
<i>Sternum</i> :	
Crista	= 77.5
Upper width	= 31
Width at lower end	= 36.5
Coracoid	= 41
Scapula	= 59
Furcula	= 30
Femur	= 36.5

#### *Discussion and Summary*

This is a hybrid between two species included in Delacour's group of seven "Blue-winged Ducks", which are highly specialised and which represent a distinct line of evolution, differing from other groups of dabbling ducks (Delacour and Scott, 1956). The least specialised are the two species of Blue-winged Teal *i.e.* the Garganey *Anas querquedula* Linnaeus and *A. discors* Linnaeus. Then there follows in order of increasing specialisation, the Cinnamon Teal, Red Shoveler *A. platalea* Vieillot, Cape Shoveler *A. smithi* Hartert, Australian Shoveler and Northern Shoveler.

The interesting feature of this hybrid is that it has revealed characters which may be described as intermediate between the two parent species along the evolutionary line of the "Blue-winged Ducks", although several of the features are found in neither of the parent species and can therefore be described as reversionary.

All the striking features of the drake Northern Shoveler have been suppressed, but others have been exposed which strongly suggest the Australian Shoveler, for which it could easily be mistaken on superficial examination, while others suggest both the Red and Cape Shoveler.

These characters may be summarised as follows:—

(a) the pale facial crescents are similar to the Australian Shoveler and tend to meet under the chin, leaving a dark chin spot. This character was also revealed in a hybrid Red Shoveler x Northern Shoveler (Harrisons, 1963), so that the broad pattern of the head of these two hybrids is identical.

(b) the mottled chestnut belly and absence of any white on the upper breast resembles both the Red and Cape Shovelers. In the Red Shoveler x Northern Shoveler hybrid referred to above, a striking white neck ring was revealed suggestive of the drake Mallard. It would seem therefore

that when the Northern Shoveler hybridises with one of the less specialised of the "Blue-winged Ducks", such as the Cinnamon Teal, the white breast shield is totally suppressed, whereas when the cross occurs with a more specialised species of the group such as the Red Shoveler, then the white breast shield is merely reduced to a white neck ring.

(c) the general colour of the cheeks and crown resembles the Cape Shoveler, but with traces of the characteristic blue-green of the Australian Shoveler.

(d) the blue and white long scapulars are approximately as highly developed as in the Australian Shoveler, while the pale chestnut short scapulars with strong dark bars are similar to the Red Shoveler.

(e) traces of black in the under tail-coverts are similar to the Cape Shoveler.

The findings in this hybrid strongly support Delacour's grouping of the "Blue-winged Ducks" as a distinct evolutionary line and our own views already expressed elsewhere, that reversionary characters exposed by hybridisation have evolutionary significance (Harrison, 1964).

#### *Acknowledgments*

We are extremely grateful to Mr. John Hall for allowing us to study this hybrid and for presenting it to us after it had died. We are also very grateful to Dr. Pamela Harrison for her photograph.

#### References:

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## **On the roosting habits of the Black-winged Kite, *Elanus caeruleus* (Desfontaines) in Tanzania**

by A. M. MORGAN-DAVIES

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The vegetation of much of Northern Tanzania, immediately south of Arusha, is open grassland with scattered thorn trees of varying density from single isolated trees to thick "bush" country.

For the short period of March and April 1964 it was common to see large numbers of *Elanus caeruleus* hovering or gliding over the open grasslands in search of food, and for many days it was a mystery where these hundreds of birds roosted at night. As a professional collector of birds for Zoological Gardens I spent a certain amount of time collecting at night and it was on one such occasion, in company with my wife, that the spotlight picked out a small isolated *Balanites aegyptiaca* tree. From a distance of two hundred yards the tree looked as if it were covered with snow but on closer examination was found to be a roosting colony of no less than eighty *Elanus caeruleus*. The tree was approximately ten feet high with a spread of about six feet compelling the birds to congregate so close they were almost wing to wing. The amount of excrement, accumulated possibly over a period of years, added to the illusion of a snow-covered tree.

The spot-light, directed on to the roosting birds at a range of six to